

Beltrante, Nick

ORGI INVESTIGATIONS, INC

Supersleuthing: Fair Means or Foul

Need to check out a job applicant? Get rid of some electronic bugs? Find out about the extracurricular activities of a wandering mate? Look into a credit rating? Nick Beltrante—a remarkably active private eye—may be your man.

A stocky fellow with curly red hair, Beltrante, 49, runs Investigations, Inc., his own twelve-person detective agency, out of Alexandria, Va. He is just as proud of the autographed pictures of George McGovern and Gerald Ford on the wall as he is of the electronic tools of his sometimes esoteric trade. It was he who debugged the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate after the White House plumbers were caught wiring the place. And four years later, Ford's election committee hired Beltrante to screen applicants for key strategy posts.

Beltrante admits that he breaks the law almost every day, and he boasts illegal sources in state and federal law enforcement agencies, banks and credit bureaus. He claims he can call upon friendly congressional aides to pry out private reports on people from the Internal Revenue Service, the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency. He will pay an employee of Ma Bell as much as \$250 for an unlisted phone number, but notes that the payola has inflated from \$25 before passage in 1974 of the Privacy Act, designed to shield citizens from at least some invasions of privacy by the Government. Since then, Beltrante gripes, some of his phone company sources have dried up, although the law does not directly threaten them.

Says Beltrante: "If I can get a per-

son's full name, date and place of birth, and Social Security number, I can find out anything else I want to know." Just that much was enough for him to begin unraveling the finances of Robert D. Johnson, a former Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Co. employee involved in a \$26 million wine-importing scheme exposed as a fraud by the Securities and Exchange Commission. Beltrante got Johnson's personnel file from a source in the phone company. Then he made contact with half a dozen of his sources in banks and discovered that Johnson had several checking accounts and a few outstanding loans. From statements that had been made to get the loans, Beltrante learned that Johnson held securities worth about \$100,000. Through a broker friend, Beltrante got the name of Johnson's broker, who confirmed that Johnson had a secret Swiss account. Finally, through Italian sources, Beltrante learned his Swiss account number and the size of his trove: \$2 million.

In another case, a 17-year-old runaway kept calling her parents collect. Using phone company records, Beltrante tracked her to a rundown house in a West Coast city. Not long ago, the wife of a federal judge asked him to check what her husband was doing while traveling to hear cases. She had the names of the two credit cards he used—enough for Beltrante's sources in the credit card companies to report on the errant judge's one-night stands. Trailing His Honor on a trip, one of Beltrante's agents watched him pick up young men. Later, Beltrante presented the distraught wife with photos of her husband doing just that.

Now Beltrante is gathering material

on a businessman. From a source in the CIA, he has learned that his quarry once worked for the agency but had to resign because of mental illness. Beltrante and another investigator are "negotiating" for details on the man's history at a mental hospital. The potential leaker in the hospital wants \$500.

Once a banker wondered whether his daughter's fiancé was really the man he said he was: an Army major who had never married. Had the father asked the military bureaucracy, he might not have received a reply for months. Unable to wait, he hired Beltrante, who called his source at the military data bank in St. Louis. Yes, the prospective son-in-law was telling the truth. It was a rare instance in which one of Beltrante's potential victims had nothing to hide.

PRIVATE EYE BELTRANTE & TWO-WAY RADIO

